



# Reading Material for ASHA

BOOK NO-5



# asha



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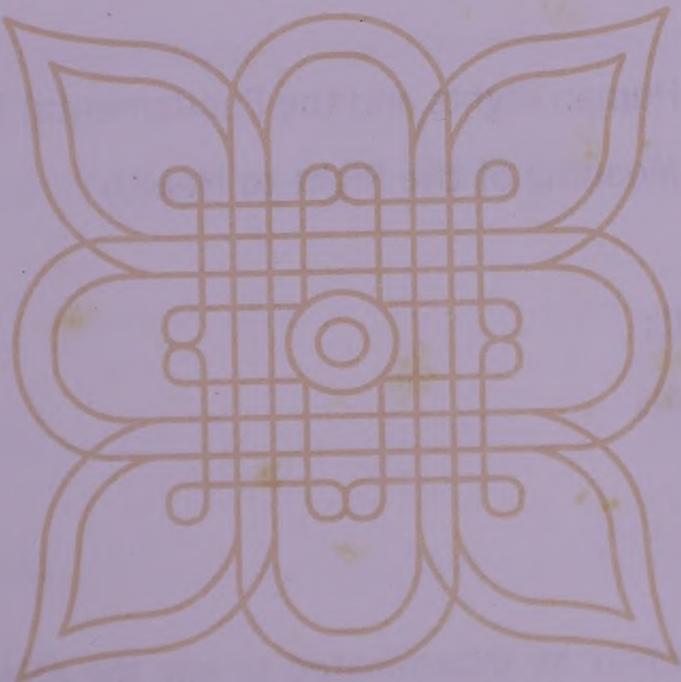
Ministry of Health and  
Family Welfare  
Government of India

**SOCHARA**  
Community Health  
Library and Information Centre (CLIC)  
Community Health Cell  
85/2, 1st Main, Maruthi Nagar,  
Madiwala, Bengaluru - 560 068  
Tel : 080 - 25531518  
email : [clic@sochara.org](mailto:clic@sochara.org) / [chc@sochara.org](mailto:chc@sochara.org)  
[www.sochara.org](http://www.sochara.org)



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January 2008



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## About Book No-5

The concept for developing Book 5 for ASHAs emerged during a ASHA group mentoring meeting. This book is envisaged to strengthen her role as a health activist. As a result, the Reading Material for ASHA and the Facilitator's Module are developed.

The Reading Material for ASHA is developed to provide ready reference material. The topics included are:

**Knowing Myself**

**ASHA as a Health Activist**

**Values of ASHA**

**Understanding the Human Rights and the Fundamental Rights**

**Understanding the Meaning of the Right to Health**

**Leadership**

**Communication Skills**

**Decision-Making Skills**

**Negotiation Skills**

**Coordination Skills**

The reading material may be disseminated among the ASHAs prior to training. This will orient them about various topics before they participate in the training based on Book 5.

**Module developed by:** Ms Pallavi Patel, Deputy Director, CHETNA, Ahmedabad

**Advice provided by:** Ms Indu Kapoor, Director, CHETNA, Ahmedabad

January 2008

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# Acknowledgments

Reading Material for ASHA Book No 5 has been conceptualized and developed by the collective efforts of numerous people. This book will enhance the communication skills, negotiation skills and leadership qualities of ASHA and bring out her role as an activist. This in turn will help in the success of National Rural Health Mission.

We are especially grateful to Shri Amarjeet Sinha, Joint Secretary- MOHFW, for providing the vision, constant support and encouragement.

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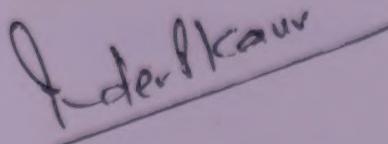
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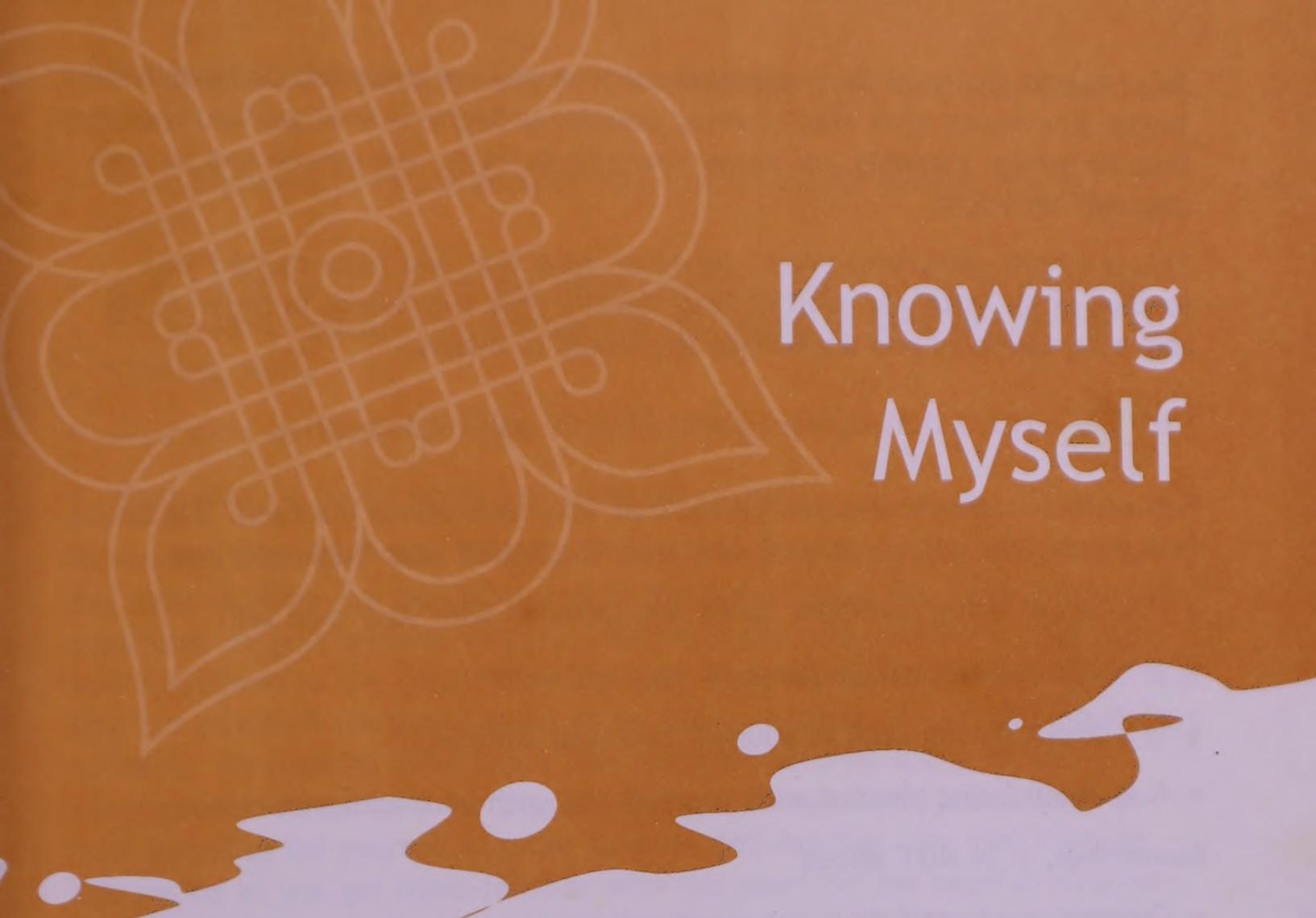


Dr. Narika Namshum  
Deputy Commissioner (MH)  
Ministry of Health & Family Welfare  
Government of India



Dr. I. P. Kaur  
Deputy Commissioner (Training)  
Ministry of Health & Family Welfare  
Government of India

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# Knowing Myself

Understanding oneself is crucial to know about one's own personality and temperament, our strengths, limitations and areas for development. The process of knowing oneself is continuous and we need to review our strengths and limitations from time to time, which will help us to change. We need to constantly grow in our capacities in order to ensure that we are able to facilitate the process of development and empowerment at the community level too. However before we attempt to empower the community we need to know whether we are empowered ourselves.

Remember we were created by nature with a unique body, soul and mind. All human beings have different characteristics and personalities. The external environment influences our personality. As women, directly or indirectly, we are told that ours is a subordinate role. We usually do not question this kind of attitude towards us. In fact, we are not trained to question the daily inequality that we face. We accept the social norms without any questioning. A woman who questions them, is viewed as "out of control."

Let us understand how this attitude affects our personality. In our Indian society a woman is identified by her relationship with others, like that of a daughter, mother, wife, etc. Being brought up in a patriarchal society, a woman internalises these norms, which makes her devalue herself. She does not think of herself as worthwhile and neglects all her needs. All this affects her self-esteem and overall personality.

As a woman you must have experienced that you are expected to be humble, to put your needs after that of other people, to learn to say “yes” all the time to others’ requests, to please everyone so as to feel valued and to seek constant approval.

This is a hard pattern to break. However, now that you have started your journey as an ASHA you need to first identify your own needs in order to be able to understand and appreciate the needs of others.

## Let Us Understand the Meaning of Self-Esteem

Self-esteem refers to the perception that you have about yourself. It is about how much you value yourself and how important you think you are.

- It is about being confident about and satisfied with your own self.
- It is about a reasonable sense of your self-worth.
- It is about having faith in yourself and your abilities.
- It is about being pleased with yourself and with your achievements.

Remember, it is NOT about

- Convincing yourself that you are of value
- Feeling confident or feeling good when other people praise you
- Having beautiful features

Let us examine the characteristics of a person with healthy self-esteem:

- Self-confidence
- Ability to express true feelings
- Ability to recognise and value own accomplishments
- Ability to forgive self and others
- Ability to welcome change

If you do not take care of yourself, respect who you are and respect your own needs, you will not be able to take care of others and respect their needs.

Give some time to know yourself. There is a need to go through the process of self-realisation. It will help you to build up a healthy self-esteem.

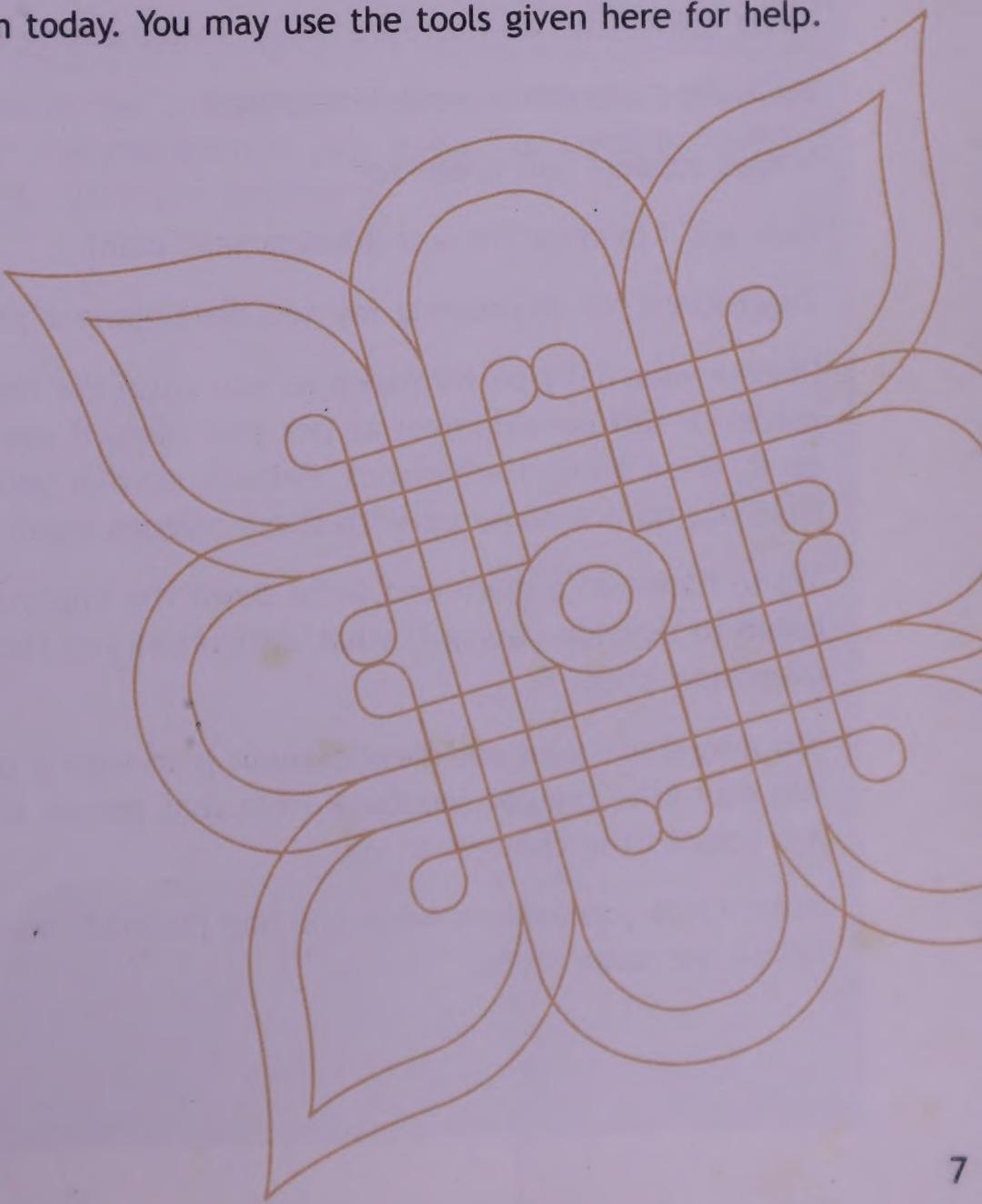
Maintain a diary about your dealing with others and yourself during the day.

The process of understanding the self and self-realisation is continuous and one needs to do it systematically.

Think about the following questions. Answering them will help you in self-reflection. More questions may be added.

- What are some of the difficulties that I face in order to complete my work?
- What are some of the changes which I will practice if I have to deal with this situation again? (The changes can be related to behaviour, way of working, etc.)
- What did I do today for which I am not happy? Why?
- What did I do today which has made me happy?

Remember, each day must contribute to your overall goals in some way. Each day must in some way be connected to the rest of your life. Each day should contribute to your general welfare, happiness and empowerment. This will also contribute to the development of your community. We have 24 hours in a day, out of which we spend about seven hours sleeping. Out of the remaining 17 hours, we need to think about how many we actually spend on self-development. As an ASHA we suggest that you initially need atleast half an hour everyday for yourself in order to grow and develop. You may increase this period as you get more familiar with this practice. We need to plan for our self-development from today. You may use the tools given here for help.



## My Self Development Plan

Name:

My Strengths:

My Limitations:

I want to...	Time frame
....improve the following three qualities/skills. List them in order of priority	
1	
2	
3	

How will I improve myself?

What difficulties do I foresee while implementing my plan?

How will I overcome these difficulties?

Whose support will I require?

How will I monitor my self-development plan?

Suggestions for monitoring my self-development plan:

Review your daily performance as you close the day. Note the efforts you made for self-development as per your plan. If you have not been able to do it, think about the reasons. Reflect on what you will do differently so that you do not come up with these reasons again.

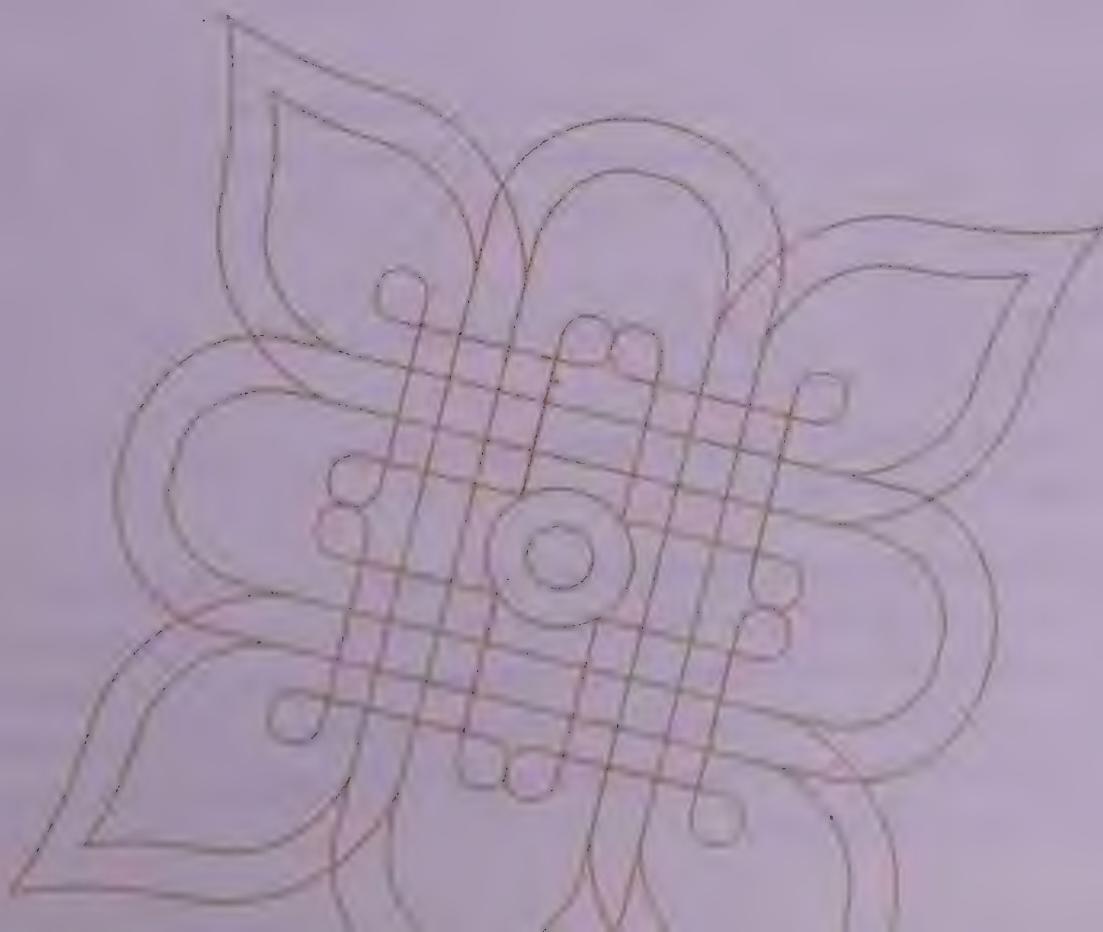
Try to maintain a diary and write down the important steps that you have taken to develop yourself, what difficulties you faced and how you overcame them.

You may share your self-development plan with a person whom you trust. You may take regular feedback from that person to learn whether she/he has noticed the changes in you.

**Note:** Once you achieve what you had planned, develop a new plan and follow the same steps.

## Some Tips to Achieve your Goal

- Be passionate about your goal. Passion is the energy that drives us. Let your passion carry you, because it will carry you far!
- Be persistent; never give up!
- If you want to enjoy the beautiful view from the top, you will have to climb over every obstacle. If you are not prepared for this, stay at base camp!
- Love people and treat them with respect and honour. Without them it is impossible to achieve the goals of development. Along with a strong will, passion and persistence, you need to feel competent in your skills. Develop the most appropriate skills. Average skills will get you to the middle. Top skills will let you achieve your final goal. Make sure that you are growing day-by-day, month-by-month, year-by-year. You can always learn new things. Even if you only improve a little at the beginning it will keep accumulating and eventually become a large amount!
- As an ASHA, demand the best from yourself and from others. Unlike a common person, an excellent person makes great demands on herself/himself.
- As an ASHA you are unique. You are talented and skilled and, therefore, you have been selected to serve the community. Make maximum use of your potential and make sure that you achieve your goals. You need to have a strong will. A strong WILL can move mountains.



# ASHA as a Health Activist

Your role as an activist to improve the access of marginalised and disadvantaged community members to public health care services is very important. Before we discuss your role in detail, let us visualise a situation.

Rami lives next to your house. She is five months pregnant. She is very weak, but has not registered her name with the ANM. Rami does not receive any healthcare services. Her husband is a drunkard. Everyday he drinks and shouts at Rami, sometimes even beats her.

You feel uncomfortable and want to stop this. You discuss this with other women in your neighbourhood. They understand your point of view. Together you decide that if Rami's husband creates problems, all of you will collectively go and stop him.

You all manage to do so. You inform Rami's husband that if this happens again, you would inform the police.

Next day when the ANM (Auxilliary Nurse Midwife) comes, you take Rami with you and register her name.

Well, admittedly a real situation does not get handled this smoothly, but you will never know just how it will fare unless you try it out. You need to take the first step towards bringing about change. Initially you will be alone but slowly, with your efforts of creating awareness through one-to-one approach or by addressing the issue in the village meetings you will have many to support you in your endeavour.

The above effort is an example to explain “activism”

As an ASHA you are expected to play the role of an activist. So it is important to understand how it is done. Read the following real life examples of activism.

### Anti Arrack Movement

In 1991, women from Dubagunta, Nellore district of the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, drove away the liquor contractors from their village. This is said to have been the beginning of the Anti-Arrack (local liquor) Movement, which finally led to the prohibition of alcohol in the state on 16 January 1995.

The main participants in the early struggle were poor rural women, predominantly from scheduled castes and backward classes, supported by voluntary organisations and, later, by politicians from opposition parties.

This is not just a story, it actually happened. It is about what a miracle that common women were able to achieve collectively. It is about a community of hard-working women who laboured in the fields to earn their living. Unfortunately, all their labour was wasted on arrack and toddy (locally made liquor). The menfolk of this village were so addicted to liquor that they not only spent money on it, but also sold the hard earned food materials, pulses, chillies, rice, butter and ghee (clarified butter), in exchange for liquor. At times, when their earnings were not enough, they incurred debts or stole household articles like goblets, plates or even their wives' saris.

After drinking arrack they would use foul language, beat their wives and children making their lives miserable. The women felt extremely helpless. There were two liquor shops in the locality. The village men used to go straight to these shops in the evening after returning from work. They came home late at night, completely drunk. They would hand over some money for household expenses only if there was any left.

The situation reached a climax when one man, in an intoxicated condition, stabbed his father to death. Apart from this incident, Vijayamma, a woman of this community was embarrassed when her relatives visited her house and, to her shame, were scared away from the village by the obscene language of her closest neighbor, a heavy drinker. She felt ashamed and thought that the village would be a much better place without arrack.

Everyday while working in the fields and at the community wells the women discussed the arrack menace. One day the women joined together and approached the village president (Sarpanch) and the village elders. They expressed their problem and asked them to get remove the arrack and toddy shops. The elders and the Sarpanch, although agreeable, were unable to do anything

The next day one hundred of the women gathered together. They went to the outskirts of the village and stopped a toddy-cart. 'You cannot come into the village', they told the cart driver strongly in unison and stood in front of it. 'Throw all the toddy away.' Each of them offered him a rupee to do so. The driver got scared and left the village.

Then a jeep with arrack packs arrived. The women surrounded it and demanded that it returned without unloading the arrack. After two days the police were called. They said that all those who bid at auctions have the right to sell arrack. The women stood unmoved. They said that they would go to the Collector and will not keep quiet if arrack was sold in their village. The arrack contractors got cold feet. They made several plans, but nothing worked and they gave up.

These events gave strength to the women. All this happened only because the women united and struggled strongly to get rid of arrack from their village.

The story of Dubagunta spread in the form of an agitation to other parts of the district.

In the literacy classes of other villages teachers started sensitising the community through puppet shows about the problems caused by arrack. They also shared the story of Dubagunta village.

Women of other villages had also suffered a lot. There were quarrels every day in their families. They survived only by taking refuge in neighbouring houses. Daily, for two-three hours they had to put up with this situation. There was not enough food for their children. So, women in other villages considered doing in their village what the women in Dubagunta had done earlier. The members of three literacy centres discussed this issue. The teachers supported and guided them. Finally, they also attacked the arrack shops.

They too managed to stop the arrack business in their village. The women in Dubagunta initiated and led a movement in which women from other villages joined and ultimately the situation changed for the better.

### Chipko Movement

The Chipko Movement was initiated in the Uttarakhand region of India by a group of villagers who opposed the commercial cutting down of trees. The movement was led by women who were influenced by Mahatma Gandhi.

For rural women, saving the environment is crucial to their economic survival. As primary food, fuel and water gatherers, women have strong interests in reversing deforestation, desertification and water pollution. The women made a living in the Himalayan foothills, using its forests as sources of food and fuel. They faced a particularly severe challenge in the

1960s, when India, to enhance economic development, started to cut trees to export the wood and earn foreign exchange. As a consequence, the hill soil washed away, causing landslides, floods and silting in the rivers below the hills. Crops and houses too were destroyed, and women had to slog even more for their fuel, fodder and water. All in all, it was the women who were the main victims of India's deforestation policies.

Against these harmful deforestation policies a movement called Chipko was born. "Chipko" in Hindi means to cling, reflecting the protesters' main technique of throwing their arms around the tree trunks marked to be cut, and refusing to move. In a remote hill town a contractor had been given the right by the state to fell 3000 trees for a sporting goods store. The area was already becoming barren. The women of the village decided to fight against this. When the woodcutters were scheduled to arrive, the men were lured away from the village leaving the women at home, busy with household work. As soon as the woodcutters appeared, the alarm was sounded and the village's female leader, a widow in her 50s, collected 27 women and rushed to the forest. The women pleaded with the woodcutter calling the forest their "maternal home" and explaining the consequences of felling trees. The woodcutters shouted at and abused the women and threatened them with guns. The women in turn threatened to hug the marked trees and die with them. It worked! The frightened labourers left and the contractor backed off. In 1974, women in a nearby area used the same tree-hugging technique in order to protest against the clearing of their forestlands.

Similarly, in your community you may come across several issues that require to be addressed. For example, the anganwadi is not functioning well; children and women are not receiving their entitlement of supplementary food; the midday meal provided is not adequate or cooked properly. It could be that widow pension is not being received in spite of all the required formalities being completed by the widows of the village. So, to bring change in such situations, some collective action is required.

However, activism or protest is not the first step in any process towards change. First, one needs to understand the situation and find out if things can be changed through simply drawing the attention of the authorities through letters, appeals or direct dialogue.

For instance, you can meet someone of importance concerning the issue, like the Sarpanch, the ANM, the schoolteacher, the Talati and discuss the matter in order to resolve it.

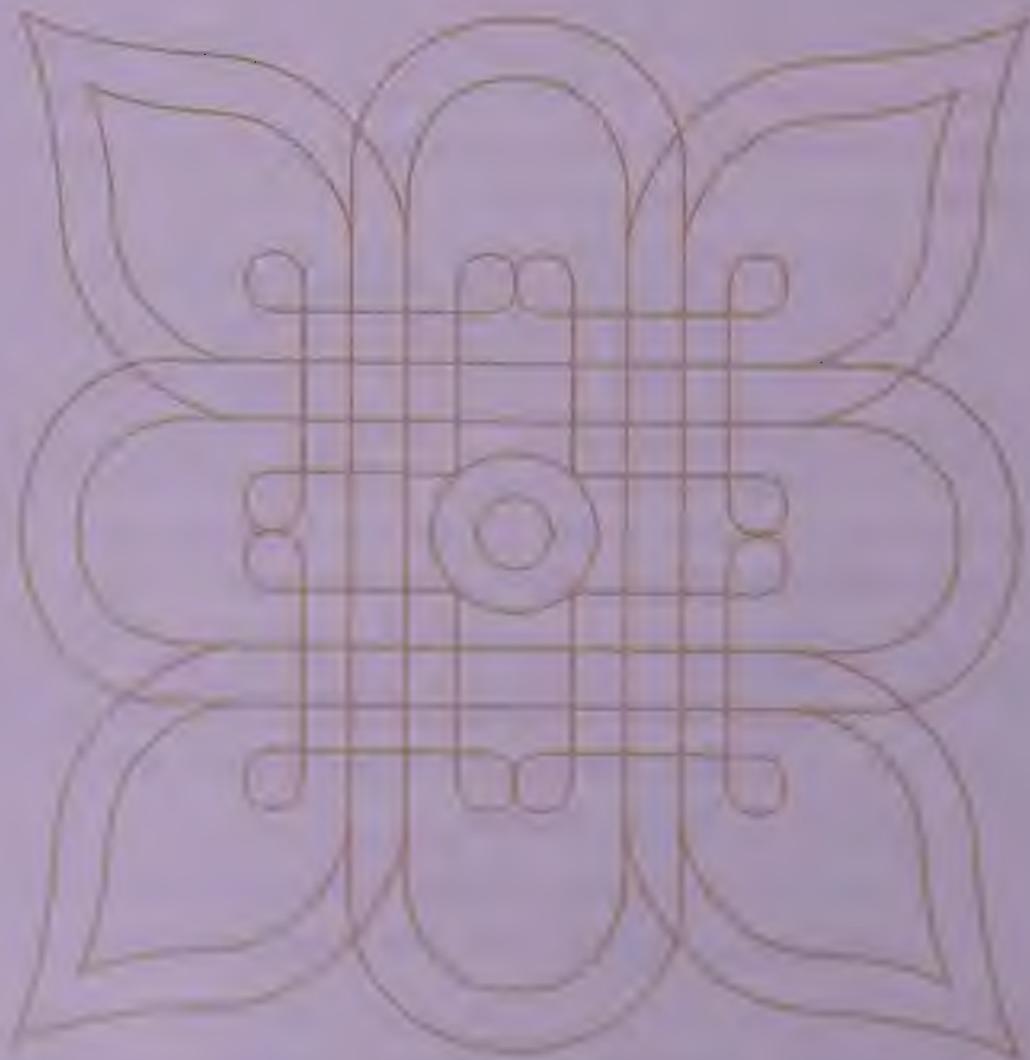
Activism may not always be the best method of changing the world but it can be quite useful under the right circumstances. It gives voice to a cause.

Activism is particularly useful/effective when you have many people who are affected with the same issues and the situation needs to be changed. If you

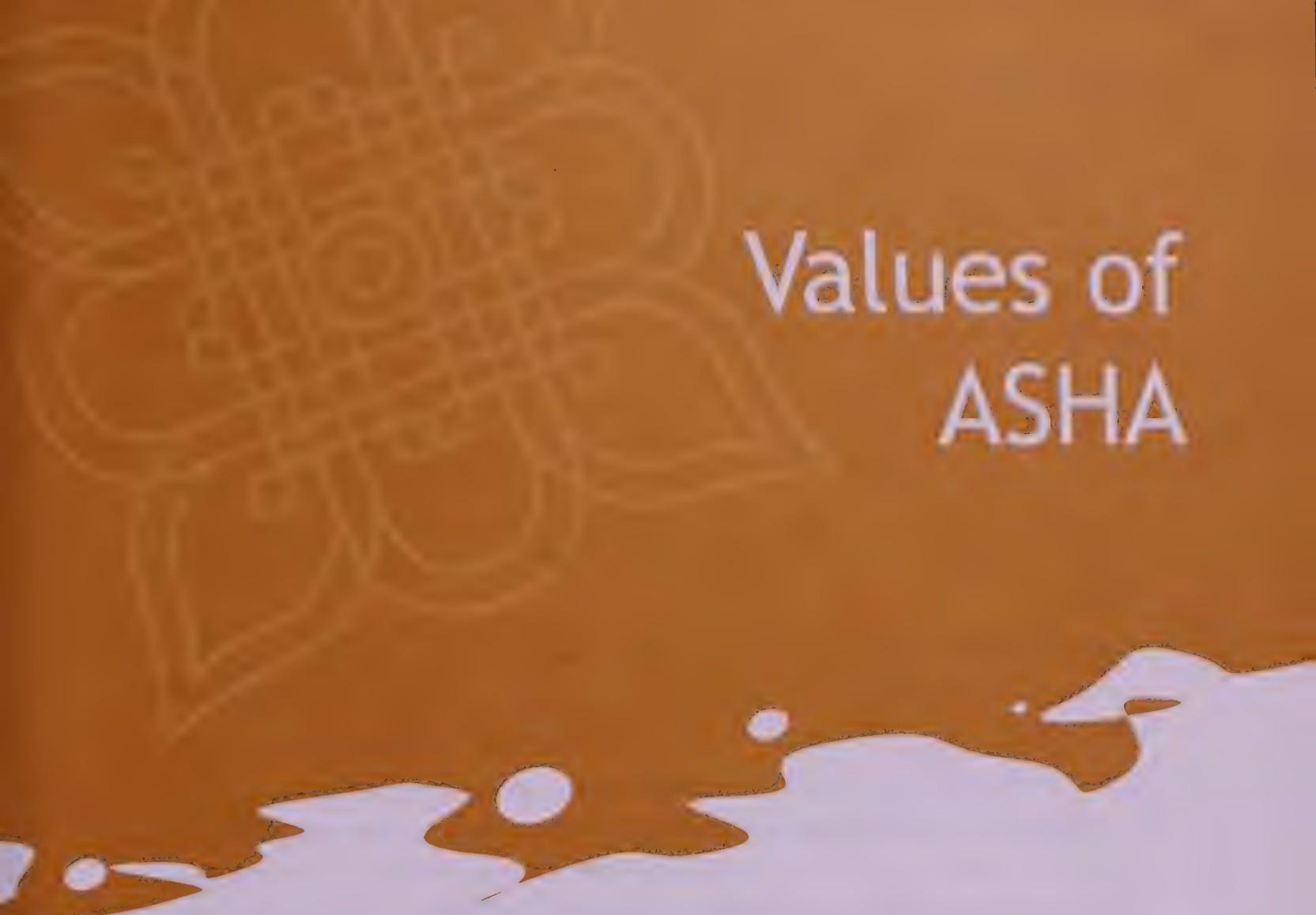
decide to initiate a movement along with the people to change a situation, first see if there is some organisation or institute working on the same issue and try and seek their support or join them in their efforts.

## As an ASHA there are Some Key Principles that You Need to Keep in Mind in Activism to Bring about Change

1. Identify and work on the issues that are most crucial and urgent and are affecting the larger community.
2. Involve the people who are affected and ensure that they cooperate with you.
3. Let it be a people's movement and struggle rather than an individual effort
4. Mobilising the community takes time and will be energy consuming. Do not lose patience and hope.



# Values of ASHA



For every individual, values are the central guiding force for all behaviour and attitudes. Culture, experience, education, religion, law, language and media influence values. It is also important to know that values can change. While working on social issues, we are basically working with the attitudes and behaviours of the community and the programme implementors for a positive and desired change. Hence, it becomes very important to address the values of individuals for social development.

Every individual has her/his own values. There is nothing like right or wrong. Generally, they are received from our parents, our society and our surroundings. Values shape our personality and identity and are directly connected with our vision of life. They guide us to decide our goal and act on it. For example, If I know the destination that I have to reach, I can always choose the correct path when I come to a crossroads.

Without a clear sense of purpose and values, we are lost and confused. For example, whether to spend time in gossiping or in my work will depend on my values.

Values remain in the subconscious mind and act like red and green traffic lights. They tell us what we should or should not do. Values are a set of beliefs about what is good and desirable. They are based on assumptions about how the world works. Our idea of what is the right thing to do in a situation comes from these values.

Some examples of values which are required for social development include:

## 1. Value of Equality

- In a patriarchal society women are viewed as submissive, weak and soft and men as strong and powerful. Due to this thinking men are given more recognition, power and respect in the family and society whereas women are usually viewed in a supportive role. As a result, girls and woman have less access to resources. For example, girls and women are given less food than boys and men of the family.

Men and boys are given more scope to develop themselves, e.g., men are given more opportunity for basic and higher education. Men, usually inherit the properties of the family, while women usually do not get a share.

If you believe in patriarchal values you will not see anything wrong if a woman is ill-treated. If you believe in equality you will respect a woman as a person.

- In our society the structure of caste is very strong and people who are from a socially advantaged class are in favour of maintaining status quo. Due to the caste structure, certain people of our society do not get opportunities to develop and get the benefits of the mainstream. As an ASHA we have to first understand problems of the poor and marginalised communities. They need to be educated about their rights and entitlements. Empower them. Encourage them to share their views and feelings. Treat each individual equally irrespective of her or his class, caste, sex and religion.

## 2. Value of Responsibility

- Your behaviour should be responsible. You should promote your own health and that of your family and community. You may keep your own house clean and throw garbage in the street, which is not responsible behaviour. As a member of the community you need to throw garbage at the designated place so as to prevent infectious diseases.
- The Sarpanch of your village has the power to make decision for the development of your village. Many times people misuse this power and use it for their own benefit or benefit of their friends, relatives and/or caste. Being responsible for your own self and to the power you are designated with is very important. No system works effectively if all the designated members do not perform their duties effectively and in a coordinated manner.

## 3. Believe in People's Knowledge and Experience

All people have experience and knowledge. It needs to be respected and valued while making any decision. Never view people as empty vessels needing

to be filled with knowledge. They should not be viewed as passive recipients. They need to be active in sharing their views while making decisions. For example, if pregnant women are not coming forward to get their names registered you will need to find out why they are not coming. Ask them to suggest strategies to increase registration of pregnant women and how they could contribute to making the strategy work.

## 4. Values of Trust

When people honour each other, there is a trust established that leads to synergy, interdependence and mutual respect. Gaining the trust of those around you is not a difficult or unachievable task. Trust can be created by sharing feelings, thoughts, views and being transparent. Trust is a glue that holds people together.

### Some of the values promoted by Mahatma Gandhi

- Always speak the truth
- Believe in the power of non-violence
- A person should not be discriminated against on the basis of her or his caste, religion, sex, class or ethnicity. Everyone should be treated as a human being.
- If you have made a mistake never be ashamed to apologise or express regret and ask for forgiveness.
- Never misuse common resources like land, water, forests, wood, etc. It belongs to every individual on earth and all should have equal access to these resources.
- You can touch the heart of people if you are committed to serve them.
- Keep people at the centre of your activities and believe in the power of people.

It is a fact that people who are conscious of their value-based priorities are more fulfilled and happier in their lives. They make more effective decisions about their own and their family and community's growth and development. To know your personal values is to be more aware of who you are, what you want and what you don't want.

As an ASHA, your work is very important. With that you should also value your family and community. You also need to think about what is more important to you and why. Answering these questions for yourself can be revealing. In some situations the family may be important and in some it may be the work. One is actually a means to another. Working together may enable you to support your family, providing you an opportunity to develop. Having a family may provide support to your work. Understanding your values enables you to move ahead and maintain a balanced and fulfilling lifestyle.

# Understanding the Human Rights and the Fundamental Rights



Every individual needs to have knowledge about their Human and their Fundamental Rights. Usually we do not come across information on this topic. Also, in the past you may not have discussed this topic with others. As an ASHA you need to know about rights. It will help you to learn about your and your community's rights. It will also help you to take appropriate decisions for the development of your community. You may be reading about Fundamental and Human Rights for the first time and you may find the information boring. We urge you to read this chapter. We have tried to make the information simple, interesting and relevant.

Think of some time in the past when you felt hurt because someone did not respect you. These include things people may have said about you to make you feel stupid or silly. For example, some one may have told you, "There is no use talking to you, you will not understand." Try and remember one or two such hurtful statements/incidents.

In 1948, after the global suffering in World War II, all the countries in the world agreed that it would be a more peaceful world if every human being respected the dignity of every other human being. As a result, the Universal Human Right Declaration came in existence. Our country has also agreed to this Declaration.

This is the set of the Universal Human Rights.

- All human beings are born free and equal.
- Everyone should have the same rights and freedom, no matter of what race, sex, or colour she or he may be. It should not matter where we were born, what language we speak or what religion or political opinions we have, or whether we are rich or poor.
- Everyone has the right to live, to be free and to feel safe.
- Adult men and women have the right to marry and start a family, without anyone trying to stop them because of their race, country or religion. Both have to agree to the marriage and both have equal rights in getting married, during the marriage, and if and when they decide to end it.
- You may believe what you want to believe, have ideas about right and wrong, and believe in any religion you want, and you may change your religion if you want, without interference.

The entire list of Human Rights is long and we shall not be discussing it here. Let us now understand what are the Fundamental Rights.

## The Fundamental Rights

As an Indian, our country has granted us six Fundamental Rights. They are:

- Right to Equality
- Right to Freedom
- Right against Exploitation
- Right to Freedom of Religion
- Cultural and Educational Rights
- Right to Constitutional Remedies

Let us understand these rights in detail.

### The Right to Equality

The state cannot discriminate against a citizen on the basis of race, caste, sex, religion or place of birth. The state also cannot discriminate against anyone in matters of employment. All citizens can apply for government jobs. But the Right to Equality specifies certain expectations. The Constitution has a special provision in the form of reserve posts while guaranteeing the Right to Equality. Reserved posts are provided for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes. Similarly, special provisions are provided for women and children.

The main reason for having these exceptions is that in our society various kinds of inequalities still exist. You must have noticed how people become victims of unequal treatment. Extending such protections does not contradict

the spirit of the Right to Equality. Such a policy is known as ‘Positive Discrimination’ or a ‘Protective Discrimination’ policy.

## Right to Freedom

The Right to Freedom is a cluster of the following six freedoms:

Freedom of speech and expression

Freedom to assemble peacefully and without arms

Freedom to form associations or unions

Freedom to move freely throughout the territory of India

Freedom to live and settle in any part of India

Freedom to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business.

The aim of the Right to Freedom is the development of a person. She/he should enjoy her/his rights democratically, and She/he should be able to live a healthy and civic life. This right is very crucial for democracy.

## Right Against Exploitation

When we accept everyone as human, we cannot treat anyone as a ‘slave’. She/he cannot be kept in captivity. She/he cannot be forced into labour. Citizens are protected against such exploitation by the law. Earlier there was practice of bonded or forced labour. Sometimes such traditions were carried on for generations. The forced labour system has now been abolished. Practice of this system is a crime which is punishable by law.

In the same way, if children below the age of 14 years are asked to do work beyond their capacity, and if they are employed in factories, mines or such hazardous places, it is called exploitation and is a crime under the Abolition of Child Labour Act.

## Right to Freedom of Religion

The Right to freedom of religion provides religious freedom to all the citizens of India. All religions are equal before the state and no religion can be given preference over the other by the state.

However, religious freedom also has to be observed under certain limitations. The state can regulate the non-religious activities of any religious community in the interest of public order, morality and health.

## Cultural and Educational Rights

India is a country of multiple religions, languages and cultures. Any community which has a language and script of its own, has the right to conserve and develop them. All minorities, religious or linguistic groups, can set up their

own educational institutions. In doing so, they may preserve and develop their own culture.

## Right to Constitutional Remedies

This right empowers citizens to approach the court in cases of denial of any of the Fundamental Rights. The court of law stands as a guard against the violation of these rights.

Under this right, it is the duty of the Judiciary to attend to all complaints pertaining to violation or rights.

## Directive Principles

Apart from these there are some Directive Principles of State Policy that incorporate such rights as are required for the overall development of human kind.

- These Principles include rights like the right to work, right to equal wage for equal work, right to an adequate livelihood, right to free and compulsory education of children up to the age of 14 years etc.
- The state should take measures to preserve the good health of labourers and minor children and to ensure that they are not forced to undertake any work that harms their health.
- The state should promote public health and animal husbandry.
- Decentralisation of power should reach the grassroots level. For that, Panchayati Raj must be established.
- The state should protect the academic and economic benefits of the weaker sections. Not only that, various programmes should be undertaken for the development of these people. In addition to that, free legal assistance should be extended to the economically weaker sections of society to help get them justice.

Think about the following statements and decide whether your Human and community's Fundamental Rights are protected.

- My village is safe and secure. All members of the community receive equal treatment and information about different government schemes and opportunities so as to avail of these services.
- My village provides all its inhabitants equal access to resources, especially water, irrespective of their caste, sex and religion.
- Whenever someone violates the rights of another person, the village committee takes note of it, discusses and takes appropriate decision and action with the consent of all the committee members, keeping in view the policies and procedures of the committee.

- All members of the village are allowed to attend the Gram Panchayat.  
Are your attending the Gram Panchayat?
- No one in your village is subjected to degrading treatment or punishment.
- My village Panchayat has people from diverse backgrounds, religion and cultures. There are some women members in our Panchayat. There are 33% seats reserved in the Panchayat for women.
- I can express my political, religious and cultural ideas and beliefs to my family and community without fear of discrimination.
- Members of my village actively participate in decision-making processes related to village and community development through the village Gram Sabha.
- The village members and labourers are paid as per minimum wage norms.
- Both men and women are paid equal wages for equal work.



# Understanding the Meaning of the Right to Health



We have discussed the meaning of Human Rights and Fundamental Rights. This discussion was conducted to have basic information on rights. Now we need to discuss the meaning of the Right to Health. As an ASHA you need to have knowledge about your right to health. This will help you to mobilise a community to access its entitlements and be vigilant. Your understanding of the Right to Health will help you to take action to access health care services from the Public Health System.

Let us first understand the meaning of the Right to Health.

## Right to Health Means

- There should be public healthcare facilities in place with adequate amount of drugs and equipment. This facility needs to be functional and implementing comprehensive and gender sensitive health programmes
- Health facilities and services have to be accessible to everyone without any discrimination.
- Nobody should be refused treatment on the basis of religion, caste, economic status, gender, etc.
- The public health facility should be located such that it can be reached at the earliest convenience.
- The health services should be affordable for the majority of the people.

- The public health services should be available free of cost.
- Information about the services available should be accessible to community members irrespective of their caste/class/religion/sex. They should be aware about their entitlements from the Public Health System.
- All health services should be gender-sensitive and address an individual's life-cycle needs and requirements.
- Health facilities and services must be scientifically and medically appropriate and of good quality.

Answer the following questions to know whether or not your community's rights to health are protected:

- Is the health service available free of cost to all the community members through the Public Health System?
- Does your ANM visit your village regularly and visit all the area of your community to provide free health services?
- Is the health facility located at a place which can be reached easily?
- Is the health service financially affordable for the majority of the people in the community?
- Is the community aware about all the health services and entitlements that they can avail of from the Public Health System?
- Is the community aware of the maternal benefit schemes like Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) or any other health schemes being implemented by the government?

If the answers to these questions are “NO”, it means that your community's Right to Health is not protected. If your community members have to pay for the health services from the Public Health System, their Right to Health is not protected. As an ASHA, if you do not know the answer to the above mentioned questions, get the information from the community by discussing these matters with them. You are a critical link between the community and the Health Facility. To exercise the community's Right to Health you also need to monitor, identify gaps and articulate their health care needs to the appropriate health care providers. Therefore, you need to be well aware of the health structure, systems and its operational issues and standards.

Different health services are available at various levels. Let us first learn about them. Usually the health services are available at the state, district, cluster and village levels.

## Village level

At the village level there is a Sub-Centre. It provides the following health services under various programmes:

Reproductive and Child Health Programme (RCH). Under this programme the following services are provided.

#### **Maternal health**

- Antenatal care
- Intra-natal care
- Postnatal care
- Essential newborn care
- Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)
- Nutrition counselling and referral

#### **Child health**

- Immunisation
- Vitamin A

Refer to ASHA Book 2 for details on maternal and child health care services

#### **Family welfare**

- Promotion and supply of contraceptives
- IUD insertions
- Follow-up services for permanent methods
- Counselling

#### **Adolescent health**

- Adolescent-friendly health support and referral

Refer to ASHA Book 3 for details on contraceptives and adolescent health services

#### **Community at large**

- Preventive and prompt referral action for Malaria, Dengue, Chikun Guniea, Japanese Encephalitis, Kala Azar, Filariasis, and communicable diseases, and in the control of epidemics.
- Treatment for minor ailments such as ordinary fever, diarrhea/dysentery /vomiting, worms infestation and first aid.
- Appropriate and prompt referral to the nearest Primary Health Centre (PHC) or Community Health Centre (CHC) if the patient is in a critical condition.
- Disease surveillance and reporting for all National Health Programmes and endemic diseases.

Other supportive structure at the village level is the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), which provides early childhood care and development and monitoring, nutrition supplementation for pregnant and lactating women and children below six years and partial Day-Care(creche) for four hours.

## **Cluster Level**

At the cluster level there is a Primary Health Centre (PHC). It provides the same health services as that provided by the Sub-Centre, alongwith the following services:

- First aid and appropriate management for injuries and accidents and stabilisation of the patient before referral/discharge.

### **Reproductive Child Health (RCH) related services**

- 24-hour services for both normal and assisted deliveries. First aid and referral for serious obstetric emergencies.
- Newborn care.
- Emergency care of sick children.
- Integrated management of neonatal and childhood Illnesses (IMNCI)
- Spacing and permanent methods of family planning and follow-up
- Abortion services limited to counselling and early term Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) using Manual Vacuum Aspiration (MVA) technique (Wherever trained personnel and facility exist).

### **National Health Programmes**

- Diagnosis and treatment of RTI/STIs, and of major illnesses targeted under the National Health Programmes-Tuberculosis (TB), Blindness, Malaria, Microfilaria, Dengue and HIV screening.
- Routine lab tests related to blood sputum, urine, stool examination and for TB, Malaria, HIV, Typhoid, Syphilis, Reproductive Tract Infection, Sexually Transmitted Diseases (RTI/STDs).
- First-level action in unusual health events and out-break situations.
- Special operation camps for vasectomy, tubectomy, MTP, hydrocelectomy and cataract surgeries.
- Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH) treatment other than through Allopathic system, as per the local people's preference.
- Support to School Health Program through regular check-ups and appropriate treatment.
- Early detection of disabilities, initial intervention and referral.
- Drinking water tests and purification.

## Block Level

Community Health Centres (CHCs) are located at the block level. They provide services similar to that provided by PHCs, in addition to the following health services:

- Well-equipped medium-sized hospital to handle emergencies related to Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) and National Health Programmes.
- Specialist treatment of endemic diseases like Dengue, Hemorrhagic fever, Cerebral Malaria, etc.
- Routine surgical procedures and simple operations.
- Essential and emergency obstetric care, and 24-hour services for normal and assisted deliveries.
- Specialised Family Planning (FP) services, Laparoscopic, Gynaecological and safe abortion services.
- Counselling and treatment of RTI/STIs.
- Basic routine pathological tests with advanced tests for some diseases as blood transfusion, and testing and treatment of drinking water sources.
- Preventing/managing epidemics and outbreaks.

## State Level

At state-level policies, plans and programmes are formulated based on the information and research regarding the health needs and problems of the people. Appropriate budgets for those services, materials and human resources are allocated.

**Quality of care:** Now you know about the health services which are available at these different levels. As an ASHA you need to be well-versed with services available at the Sub-Centre and the PHC. Knowing only about the services is also not enough. Under the Rural Health Mission great emphasis is being put on the quality of health care. As an ASHA you need to make sure that your community members receive quality health care. There are certain norms which need to be followed by the health service providers and health care service institutions provide quality care to patients. Generally, patients do not know about these. As a result, they often get poor quality services.

## Quality Health Care is a Right of the Community

- A professionally trained and certified person has to take history and examine the patient.
- The patient is to be given appropriate/adequate information related to the diagnosis, treatment procedures and drugs prescribed without scaring or causing undue tension.

- The patient needs to be given time to share concerns. After listening to them, help them to make an informed decision regarding their treatment and any procedure (risk and safety factors) and choose the most suitable alternative if there is a choice available.
- The essential equipment, supplies and technical staff must be available at the facility. Patient/s must not be told that due to unavailability of drugs or equipment being out of order s/he cannot receive the necessary service.
- Privacy, comfort, confidentiality, and dignity of the patient are to be maintained- have curtains in examination rooms, allow the patient's relatives and family to accompany her/him, if desired, and keep registers/files locked.
- Behaviour of the health care providers need to be courteous, non-discriminatory and reassuring.
- Patient must feel motivated enough by the health care providers and the system to continue and complete the treatment.
- Appropriate and adequate treatment is be given.

It is very important that you visit your nearby sub-center and PHC regularly to learn whether these centres are providing quality basic health services. Your visit needs to be well-planned. We have given a checklist in Annexure 1, which you should carry while visiting these centres. Observe the aspects mentioned in this checklist. If you observe that the PHC and sub-centre are not providing quality health care services you have a right to discuss the same with the medical officer in-charge and the ANM. If you do not get proper responses from them you can go to the Block Health Officer or Chief Medical Officer and bring your concerns to their notice. Make a note of the names of all the people with whom you speak.

## **Annexure 1**

### **Observation Checklist**

#### **Observation Checklist for sub-centre**

The participants need to collect the following information

#### **I. General Information**

Name of the sub-centres village \_\_\_\_\_

Total population covered by the sub-centre \_\_\_\_\_

Distance from the PHC \_\_\_\_\_

#### **II. Availability of staff at the sub-centre**

Is there an ANM available/appointed at the centre? Yes/No

Is there health worker-male (MPW) available/appointed? Yes/No

Is there a part-time attendant (female) available? Yes/No

#### **III. Availability of Infrastructure at the sub-centre**

- Is there a designated government building available for the sub-centre?  
Yes/No
- Is the building in working condition? Yes/No
- Is there a regular water supply at this sub-centre? Yes/No
- Is there regular electricity supply at this sub-centre? Yes/No
- Is the blood pressure apparatus in working condition in this sub-centre?  
Yes/No
- Is the examination table in working condition in this sub-centre? Yes/No
- Is the steriliser instrument in working condition in this sub-centre? Yes/No
- Is the weighing machine in working condition in this sub-centre? Yes/No
- Are there disposable delivery kits available in this sub-centre? Yes /No

#### **IV. Availability of Services at the sub-centre**

- Does the doctor visit the sub-centre at least once a month? Yes/No
- Is the day and time of this visit fixed? Yes/No
- Is facility for delivery available in this sub-centre during a full 24-hour period? Yes/No
- Is treatment of diarrhoea and dehydration offered by the sub-centre?  
Yes/No
- Is treatment for minor illness like fever, cough, cold, etc. available in this sub-centre? Yes/No

- Is facility for taking a blood slide in the case of fever for detection of malaria available in this sub-centre? Yes/No
- Are contraceptive services available at this sub-centre? Yes/No
- Are oral contraceptive pills distributed through this sub-centre? Yes/No
- Are condoms distributed through the sub-centre? Yes/No

## Observation Checklist for PHC Centre

### I. General Information

- Name of the PHC village \_\_\_\_\_
- Total population covered by the PHC\_\_\_\_\_
- Is there a designated government building available for the PHC? Yes/ No
- Is the building in working condition? Yes/No
- Is water supply readily available in this PHC? Yes /No
- Is electricity supply readily available in this PHC? Yes/No
- Is there a telephone line available and in working condition?

### II. Availability of Staff in the PHC

- Is a Medical Officer available/appointed at the centre? Yes/No
- Is a Staff Nurse available at the PHC? Yes/No
- Is a health educator available at the PHC? Yes/No
- Is a health worker-male(MPW) available/appointed? Yes/No
- Is a part time attendant (female) available? Yes/No

### III General Services

#### 1. Availability of medicines in the PHC

- Is the anti-snake venom readily available in the PHC? Yes/No
- Is the anti-rabies vaccine readily available in the PHC? Yes/No
- Are drugs for malaria readily available in the PHC? Yes/No
- Are drugs for tuberculosis readily available in the PHC? Yes/No

#### 2. Availability of curative services

- Is cataract surgery done in this PHC? Yes/No
- Is primary management of wounds done at this PHC? (stitches, dressing etc. Yes/No
- Is primary management of fracture done at this PHC? Yes/No

- Are minor surgeries done at this PHC? Yes/No
- Is primary management of cases of poisoning done at the PHC? Yes/No
- Is primary management of burns done at the PHC? Yes/No

#### **IV Reproductive and Maternal Care and Abortion Services**

1. Availability of reproductive and maternal health services
  - Are ante-natal clinics regularly organised by this PHC? Yes/No
  - Is facility for normal delivery available in the PHC 24 hours a day? Yes/No
  - Are facilities for tubectomy and vasectomy available at the PHC? Yes/No
  - Are internal examination and treatment for gynaecological conditions and disorders like leucorrhoea and menstrual disturbance available at the PHC? Yes/No
2. Is facility for abortion- Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP)available at this PHC? Yes/No
3. Is treatment for anaemia given to both pregnant as well as non-pregnant women? Yes/No
4. How many deliveries have been conducted in the last quarter (three months)? \_\_\_\_\_

#### **V Child Care and Immunisation Services**

1. Are low birth-weight babies treated at this PHC? Yes/No
2. Are there fixed immunisation days? Yes/No/No information
3. Are BCG and measles vaccine given at this PHC? Yes/No
4. Is treatment for children with pneumonia available at this PHC? Yes/No
5. Is treatment of children suffering from diarrhoea with severe dehydration done at this PHC? Yes/No

#### **VI Laboratory and Epidemic Management Services**

1. Is laboratory service available at the PHC?
  - Is blood examination for anaemia done at this PHC?— Yes/No
  - Is detection of malaria parasite by blood smear examination done at this PHC? Yes/No
  - Is sputum examination to diagnose tuberculosis conducted at this PHC? Yes/No
  - Is urine examination of pregnant women done at this PHC? Yes/No



# Leadership

Whenever we think of a leader, who comes to mind first? It may be a great freedom fighter, a popular politician or a renowned religious guru. All these people have some common qualities, they alter a challenging situation or a problem into an opportunity.

Leadership can be defined as mobilising people and resources towards achieving valued goals. Through knowledge and experience most people have the potential to become a leader in any given situation.

Effective leadership in the community requires skills like team building, communication, conflict resolution, negotiation and advocacy for change.

As an ASHA you often have to play the role of a leader. Hence it is important to understand the meaning of leadership and qualities, which will help you in playing your leadership roles effectively.

## Leadership means

- to be responsible
- to inspire people to follow you
- to be non-judgemental with people and transparent in your actions
- to show confidence, assertiveness, enthusiasm, passion and accountability
- to have skills for getting things done in cooperation with others

Gandhiji was a great leader. He took people along with him to achieve freedom for our country. Let us see the principles that he followed as a leader.

### **Courage: Courage to stand up and be accountable for your beliefs and opinions**

If your community's Right to Health is violated, as an ASHA you need to have courage to bring it to the notice of the concerned stakeholders. For example, if the ANM is not coming to your village regularly or she is not visiting the houses of socially backward families have courage to tell her that you have noted her absence and you will take the necessary steps if this continues. If she does not listen, be ready to inform the Sarpanch, SHG members and even the medical officer. Continue your efforts till you ensure that she visits all the people in your village regularly.

### **Responsibility: Carry out your role and responsibility honestly**

As a leader you need to be responsible, first person for your self and then for your community. As an ASHA you are given specific roles and responsibilities. You should inform your community of these. This will prove useful in two ways:

- If they are aware about your roles they will be able to bring it to your notice if you are not performing it effectively.
- They will also support you in carrying out your roles and responsibilities more effectively

### **Encouragement: Invite the community to join you in availing of their right to quality health care**

Every individual needs encouragement. As a leader, whenever you meet anyone read the unwritten words on their forehead "I am important." Encouragement comes by involving community members in the process when availing for them their entitlements from the public health system or by giving them some responsibility to improve the health environment in the community.

### **Improvement: Constantly enhancing your competencies**

As a leader, an ASHA should constantly improve her knowledge and skills. Be aware of any new decision made regarding the delivery of health services and any new schemes declared. Be in constant dialogue with the ANM as she is a good source of information. Your skills will improve by practising them. You may fail too. From failures you learn what should not be done. If you are repeating your mistakes it means that you are not learning. By learning you will be able to stand out.

## **Leadership Style**

People adopt different leadership styles. The two common styles are

- Authoritarian
- Participatory

Authoritarian leaders do not come forward for cooperation or collaboration. They are heavily task-oriented people. They expect people to do what they are told without question or debate. They are usually intolerant of what they do not agree with. It is difficult for community members to contribute their views or empower themselves under this kind of leadership.

A participatory leader creates a positive environment in which all members can reach their highest potential. They encourage the community to reach the set goals as effectively as possible, while also working tirelessly to strengthen the bonds among various members. They usually form and lead some of the most productive teams.

As an ASHA, it is the most appropriate to adopt a participatory leadership style. Some of the characteristics of participatory leadership are given below:

### **Leaders establish goals and set the direction**

As an ASHA you need to articulate what is an achievable goal in your village. You should establish your goal and direction by involving your community as to how, where and when it would be completed.

For example, there should not be any maternal death in the coming year in your village, or, All children of your village should be immunised in the next six months.

### **Leaders affirm and articulate values**

As leaders we need to have certain values like honesty, hardwork, trustworthiness etc. You have to demonstrate these values in your actions. You may communicate to your community members that you are hardworking but if you do not show it in your actions people will not believe you.

For example, you are aware that every eligible child in the village needs to be fully immunised. But when the ANM comes for immunisation you are not present. Then will people believe that you are a hardworking person?

### **Leaders have high standards and high expectations**

As an ASHA you should be firm about receiving high quality health care services from the sub-centre and the PHC for your village community.

Make sure that the ANM performs her role professionally. As an ASHA you should also provide her support to carry out her role effectively. For example,

inform the community about the date and place of the health camp or day of visit of the ANM and encourage them to be present at the camp.

If the health service provider ill-treats a community member, take a note of it and confront the person concerned.

### Leaders are accountable and responsible

As an ASHA you are accountable, both to the community and the health care provider. Be an effective link between both of them by sharing information from one end to the other.

#### Some tips to be accountable:

- You will gain personal power and the ability to get results if you assume accountability in all situations, even if you do not immediately see the results.
- Complain only to the person who can do something about it.
- Concentrating on blaming others or complaining will reduce your energy and the energy of people around you.
- Venting your feelings once or twice is a good stress management technique. Being constantly critical of them has no positive outcome.

**“Focus on action and not on blame”**

**“If it is to be, it is up to me”**

**“Light a candle instead of cursing the darkness”**

Ultimately, you are the one responsible for yourself. You play a crucial part in every situation in your life. What you are today is a result of your choice. This is accountability.

### Leaders involve others in decision-making

As a leader you have to make various decisions. A community leader rarely makes a decision alone. By law, a decision, which affects the community needs to be taken along with the community members. The community needs to feel ownership of decisions taken. Only then they will do their best to achieve what they have decided.

For example, as an ASHA you have to articulate and assert yourself for your community's health needs. You need to decide and prioritise the health needs of the community along with community members and jointly develop a plan of action. This will encourage them to join hands with you to take necessary action.

### Leaders motivates others

To achieve the goal of the Right to Health you need the support of your

community members, the Panchayat, SHG etc. As a leader, you need to motivate your community to join hands with you. Motivation comes through

- Being in regular contact with them
- Sharing necessary information regularly
- Giving them responsibility
- Thanking them for their support
- Giving them credit for their efforts
- Appreciating them honestly in public

### Leaders achieve unity

As a leader you need to promote unity among your community members and between the community members and health care providers. Unity can be achieved by listening to everyone's points of view while taking decisions. Do not make anyone feel neglected since later they may become difficult persons to manage.

Unity comes when community members feel the ownership of the goal that you have set as an ASHA for your village.

### Leaders serve as role models

Leaders have followers. Therefore, it is very important that all your actions are responsible.

For example, as an ASHA you are assigned the role of accompanying a pregnant woman for a referral. If you performed this role and saved the life of woman in your village, you have set an example. Next time, when the need arises, other community members will come forward to accompany a pregnant woman during an emergency. They may also arrange for money and transport, if required.

### Leader listen and explain

Listening helps to make the process of decision-making easier and more meaningful. Also, as a leader you need to articulate and explain your point of view.

For example, at the village level families are not proactive in preparing for the birth of a child. You need to listen to them about the reasons for their lack of motivation. Based on their views, explain to them the need for birth preparedness and the likely consequences of poor birth preparedness. Share positive examples where birth preparedness has helped to save a woman's life.

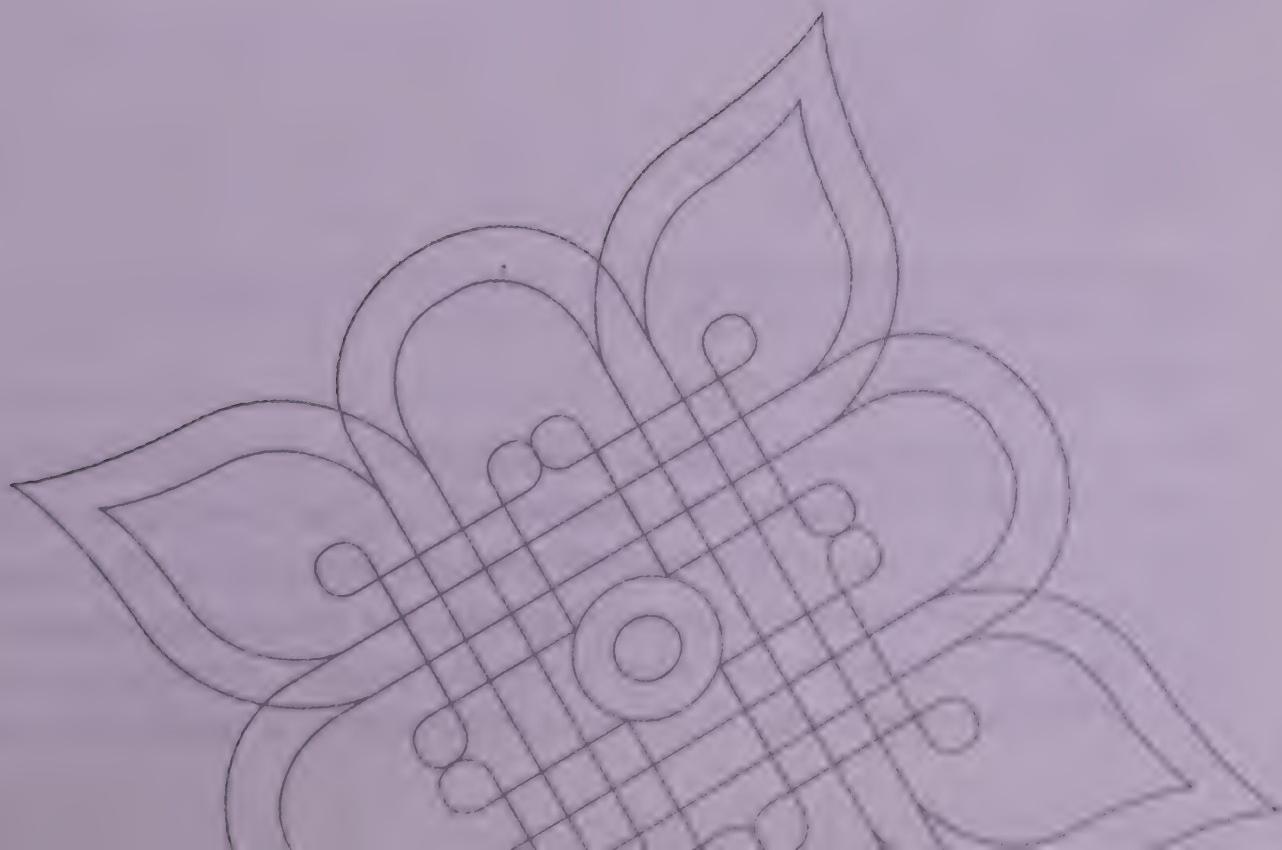
## Leaders represent the community

A leader is the face of the community. As an ASHA, when you discuss the health concerns of your community with the health service provider, you are representing your community. Share their points of view rather than merely yours.

For example, you have to develop a comprehensive village health plan along with the Panchayat and health and sanitation committee. While developing a plan you need to share the concerns of the poorest of the poor of your community. Share their feelings and opinions, and make sure that whatever decision is taken to develop the health plan, reflects their voices. If some segment of the community has shared that the source of drinking water is not accessible to them, it should become a point of discussion while developing a comprehensive health plan for the village.

**As a leader some of the skills you need to build are**

- **Communication**
- **Decision-making**
- **Negotiation**
- **Coordination**



# Communication Skills

God gave us a mouth and two ears to communicate

People failing to communicate create confusion, frustration and problems. Communication is the exchange or two-way flow of information and ideas between two or more persons.

Communication is the most important skill to fulfill your role as an ASHA. There are different forms of communication

- Verbal communication
- Non-verbal communication
- Written communication

As an ASHA you need to use all three types of communication.

## Verbal communication

This is the most common mode of communication used. Normally, we think communication is completed once we have orally delivered the message. But that is not true. Chances are that the message was not received properly. To know if your message was received properly, ask the person whether she/he understood the message and take feedback. In short, effective communication is two-way. One-way communication is usually not effective.

## Some Tips for Effective Verbal Communication

- Accuracy
- Clarity
- Correctness

### Points to take care of while communicating:

- Maintain eye contact with the person with whom you are talking.
- Be confident while communicating. Stand or sit confidently.
- Stick to the point so that you do not end up using too much time.
- Be specific, sincere, honest and direct while communicating
- Share feelings while communicating.
- Be open-minded. This will help you to understand the other person's point of view.
- Your voice should be loud enough so that everyone can hear you. Your pronunciation should be clear. Use words which are easy to understand. Do not use technical words or jargon.
- If someone has something worth mentioning, give them scope to do so. Never forget to compliment/appreciate others.

The speaker is assured that you are listening when you use verbal affirmations like, "I see," "I agree", "uh, okay, then...." during the conversation at appropriate points.

## Non-Verbal Communication

We all know that communication is not only about words and languages. Even silence communicates and eyes talk. Hence, it is important to understand these forms of communication which are referred to as non-verbal communication.

Here are some non-verbal behavioural aspects which require extra attention.

- **Eye contact:** Looking at the person with whom you are talking is an effective way of declaring that you are sincere/honest about what you are saying and also communicates confidence.
- **Body posture:** The value or weight of your messages will increase if you face the person, stand or sit appropriately close and hold your head erect.
- **Facial expressions:** Express appropriate feelings on your face. Effective communication requires supporting facial expressions.
- **Gestures:** Use of hand gestures to describe and emphasise adds value but it should not be overdone in excitement or anxiety.
- **Voice characteristics:** The volume, tone, speed of speech and pitch should be well modulated.

## Active Listening is Communication too

All of us can hear, but all of us cannot listen. Hearing and listening are not the same. Hearing is involuntary, while listening involves the reception and interpretation of what is heard. It decodes the sound heard meaningfully. Does a knock on the door sound the same all the time? What if you are alone and you hear a knock late at night? What happens if you hear a knock when you are expecting someone whom you like?

Active listening involves listening with a purpose. It may be to gain information, obtain directions, understand others, solve problems, share interests, see how the other person feels, or even show support. This type of listening takes the same amount of, or more, energy than speaking. It requires the listener to hear various messages, understand the meaning and then verify the meaning by offering feedback, or confirming by paraphrasing what was heard.

Following are some of the tips for good listening:

- Maintain eye contact
- Sit or stand in a receptive position, lean forward
- Encourage by using positive gestures and words
- Remove distractions
- Understand non-verbal signals
- Stop talking or doing what you were doing before you began listening
- Give time for listening
- Do not pass judgments or criticise mid-way while some one is speaking
- Reflect on the feeling expressed and paraphrase what has been heard
- Have patience

As an ASHA, keep the following points in mind while communicating with your community.

- Never discriminate on the basis of caste and class while communicating with the community. Your tone and gesture should not change while talking to socially and economically disadvantaged community members. Talk to them with respect and dignity.
- A community has immense knowledge and experience. Give people a chance to share and use it. Do not treat them like empty vessels.
- Never make any comment which emphasises gender inequality. Your communication should be gender-sensitive.
- Do not react fast. Listen, assimilate, analyse and then react.

As an ASHA, you need to keep the following points in mind while communicating with stakeholders

- Give due respect to all the stakeholders, whether they are from the community or from the health care system.
- While sharing information with the stakeholders, make sure that you prepare with the necessary information, data and evidence. Never generalise the information. Be very specific about what you want or do not want from them, what you want to change and what you want to continue.
- Be calm while communicating. Do not show your anxiety.
- Do not use a blaming tone.

You will be surprised by how a simple smile and humility will affect those around you. And, of course, confidence and assertiveness will help get your message through. A point to note - think before you speak.

## Written Communication

As an ASHA you would need to write applications and letters to the authorities to improve access to health care services. You also need to document the processes and decisions taken during meetings. Let us first learn how to write simply and effectively. Read the following letter:

Dear Sir,

There are many women in villages in different areas, which is far away from the place where the ANC clinic is organised. Especially in the summer season, the women cannot travel long distances to the clinic and hence cannot get their ANC check-ups done. If the clinic can be conducted in two areas on different dates all women can come there and benefit. I request this on behalf of all the community women.

Thank you

ASHA  
Village name

Do you clearly understand what the letter is about?

It is a well-intended effort to bring to the notice of the person concerned the conditions that deprive the village women of the ANC's services and also

suggests solutions to overcome this problem. But since it is not clear and specific, it does not seem to be effective.

The letter can be made more effective if it includes the following details:

Before starting to write an application/letter, every writer should ask

1. Do I know what I want to say (the subject)?
2. Do I know to whom I am writing?
3. Do I know why I am writing?

Read the same letter given below and see the difference between the first letter and the second.

To

Date

\_\_\_\_\_ (Name and address)

*Sub: request to organise MAMTA Day at two locations in the village*

*Dear CDHO (write the name of the concerned person):*

*I am working as ASHA for the village \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ Block. My village has a population of \_\_\_\_\_. The houses are scattered across the areas. The ANM regularly comes and organises MAMTA Day. However, it is organised at a place which is not accessible for all the pregnant women. A large number of women living on the other side of the village, are not able to attend the antenatal clinic, due to the distance.*

*I suggest that the antenatal clinic may be conducted in two places of the village on different dates. I had a discussion about the same with the ANM. She informed me that she needs permission from you. I request you to look into this matter. As an ASHA I take the responsibility to bring all the pregnant women so they have their antenatal check-up. You are welcome to visit our village.*

*Thank you.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*ASHA(write name of ASHA and the village)*

There are many points to be kept in view in order to convey our messages correctly and precisely. The principles of writing include several do's and don'ts

### Some Do's

1. Address it to the appropriate person
2. Check that the letter has a date and reference
3. Keep sentences short
4. Use simple and familiar words instead of complex and unfamiliar ones
5. Do not be vague and mention the reference points for clarity
6. Never assume that the reader is aware of the facts and would understand them.
7. Review your writing to add any missing points
8. Write and re-write the letter to get the essence correctly.
9. Explain facts through evidence and examples
10. The letter should flow logically from one point to another
11. Write with a view to express and not to impress

### Some Don'ts

1. Avoid unnecessary words
2. Avoid incomplete and irrelevant arguments
3. Do not use ambiguous sentences and universal negatives



# Decision-Making Skills

Each decision that we make has a consequence and a level of impact. Even a small decision has the potential to drastically change the course of our lives. All of us can recall some such decisions taken personally or by others which have left an important impact. Decision-making is a learned skill and must be practiced consciously to strengthen it.

As an ASHA you would often require to take some decisions, which will effect the community at large. Hence, it is very important for you to master the skill of participatory decision-making by involving the community at all levels.

There are some basic steps of decision-making which need to be followed:

## Define the Problem

Look at the situation carefully and examine it from all perspectives to find out the actual problem.

For example, you have observed frequent occurrence of malaria in the village, affecting the basic health status of the people, especially women and children. Malaria seems to be the problem and needs to be eradicated. However, the root problem is drainage water coming out of every house collecting near residential areas and schools.

To eradicate malaria completely you need to mobilise people and think of solutions to control the drainage problem.

## Gather Information

Once the problem is identified, collect all the necessary information, seek advice from the appropriate authority and involve the community. Use all available resources in a way to amicably solve this issue.

## Think of Alternatives

At this stage of decision-making you need to arrange a community meeting and discuss the situation with people with whom you have worked with to collect information regarding the problem. You may also present this in the Gram Sabha. What is important is that people accept and understand the problem. Later, alternative solutions may be suggested.

In participatory decision-making, it is very important that the community owns the problem and feels responsible towards solving it.

Moreover, unless people accept the solution, it cannot be achieved on a permanent basis.

## Choose an Alternative

Part of effective decision-making is the ability to select one good alternative from the various options available. This can be done through consensus of the community and approval, of the authorities. To gain consensus and approval you would need to discuss it in the village meetings, the Gram Sabha, Panchayat meetings etc.

Before selecting the right alternative, assess all available options. It is important to be practical in taking a decision.

## Put the Decisions to Work

An effective decision is one which can be put into action. Thus, implementation is very important. During this process, keep checking if it is moving towards the expected solution, and if there is something else which needs to be addressed.

Nobody is an expert in every skill. They can be mastered only through practice. Hence, decision-making skills can also be sharpened through experience and practice.

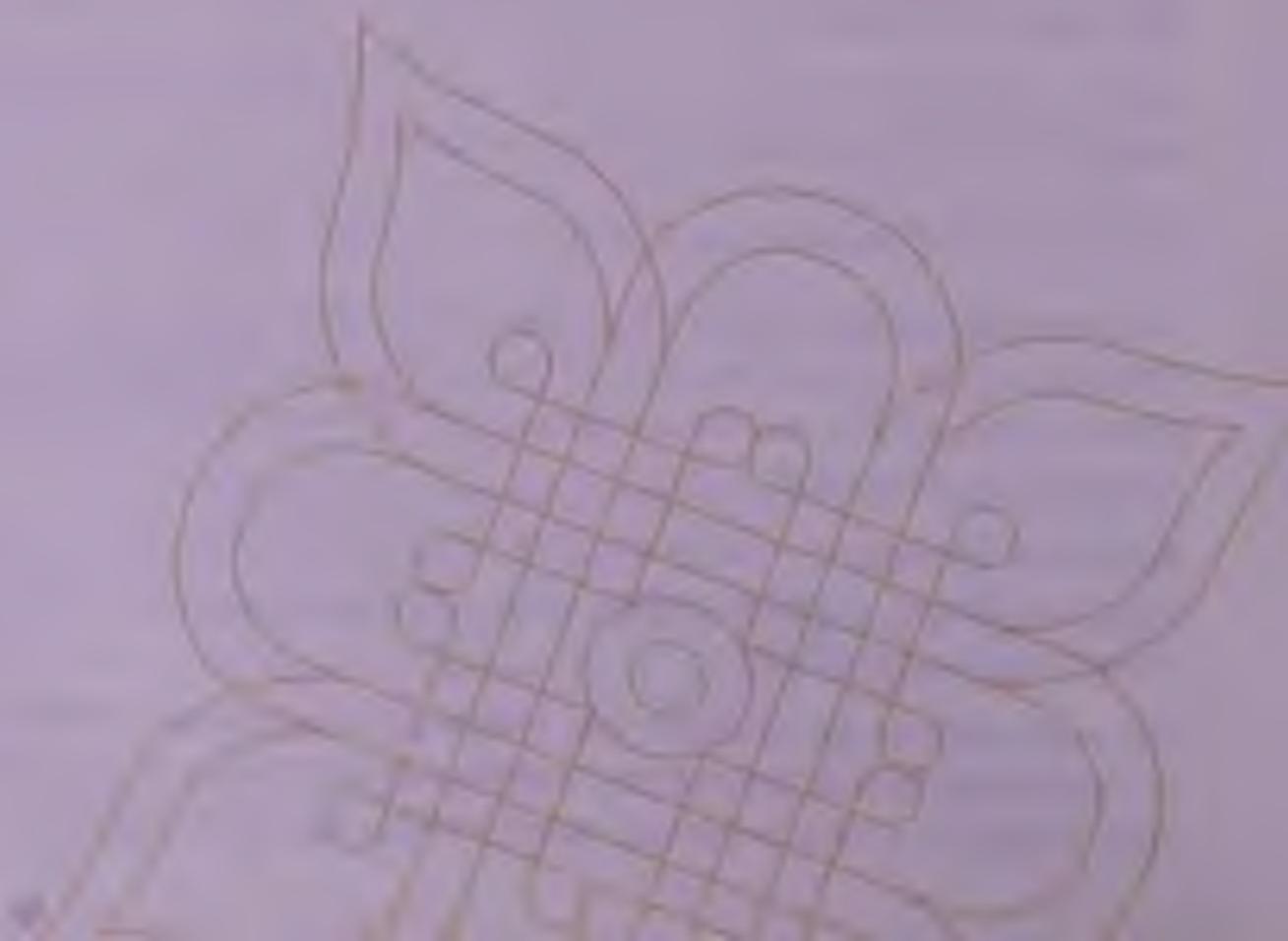
But one needs to be confident and prepared to take responsibility if the decision fails. This is part of the learning process. Accepting responsibility for your actions is a very important quality and a sign of maturity.

## How to Handle Difficult Situations

If you are finding it difficult to take a decision, take a short break and then continue. After the break ask the group member/s to restate the issue and review the options. It is also may be a good idea to adjourn and let people think about it overnight.

### Description of an Effective Decision

- An effective decision should not leave any unhappy feeling among group members after the meeting has been adjourned.
- An effective decision can be translated into reality. It should not be decision impossible to put in action.
- An effective decision can be lived with. It does not set up conflict of a debilitating nature among persons or groups.
- An effective decision must involve the group enough for the members to implement the decision.



# Negotiation Skills



Although everyone negotiates informally all the time without even being aware of it, formal negotiation is a skill that can be learned through experience and practice. People who negotiate a lot tend to be much more skilled at it than people who have not participated in any formal negotiation. Negotiation means dealing with differences between two or more individuals or groups. As an ASHA you will have to deal with differences. You have to resolve these differences to achieve the larger goals of village health programmes. Let us build an understanding of the process of negotiation.

Negotiating is the process by which two or more people/parties with different needs and goals work to find a mutually acceptable solution to an issue. Because negotiating is an inter-personal process, each negotiating situation is different, and is influenced by each party's skills, attitudes and style. We often look at negotiating as unpleasant because it implies conflict, but negotiating need not be characterised by bad feelings or angry behavior. Understanding more about the negotiation process allows us to manage our negotiations with confidence and increases the chance that the outcomes will be positive for both parties.

Negotiations need not be confrontational by being offensive, insulting and challenging. In fact, effective negotiation is characterised by groups working together to find a solution, rather than each group trying to WIN at any cost.

Keep in mind that the attitude that you take in a negotiation (e.g, hostile or cooperative) will set the tone for the interaction. If you are confrontational, you will have a fight on your hands.

Negotiating is a complex process but definitely one worth mastering. If you keep in mind that you are responsible for the success or failure of the negotiation, and if you follow the tips given here, you will find the process easier.

We need to understand that in a successful negotiation everyone wins. The objective should be agreement, not victory or to make the other party or person feel low.

As an ASHA you will have to constantly negotiate with people and situations in order to be able to fulfil your responsibility. It is important to realise that it is quite a challenge to negotiate with people in authority but with enough preparation and practice you can deal effectively with any kind of situation which requires negotiation.

## Let us Understand the steps of Successful Negotiation

### **Ask for the other person's perspective**

In a negotiating situation use questions to find out what the other person's concerns and needs might be. Some examples of likely questions are: What do you need from me on this? What are your concerns about what I am suggesting/asking? When you hear the other person express their needs or concerns, use appropriate listening responses to make sure you heard correctly.

### **State Your needs**

In the process of negotiation the other person requires to know your needs. It is very important to state not only what you need but also why you need it.

### **Prepare options beforehand**

Before entering into a negotiating session, prepare some options that you can suggest if your preferred solution is not acceptable. Anticipate why the other person may resist your suggestion and be prepared to counter the same with an alternative.

### **Do not argue**

Negotiating is about arriving at solutions. Arguing is about trying to prove the other person wrong. We know that during negotiation each party tries to prove the other one wrong, no progress is made. Do not waste time in arguing. If you disagree with something state your disagreement in a gentle, but assertive, way. Do not demean the other person or get into a power struggle.

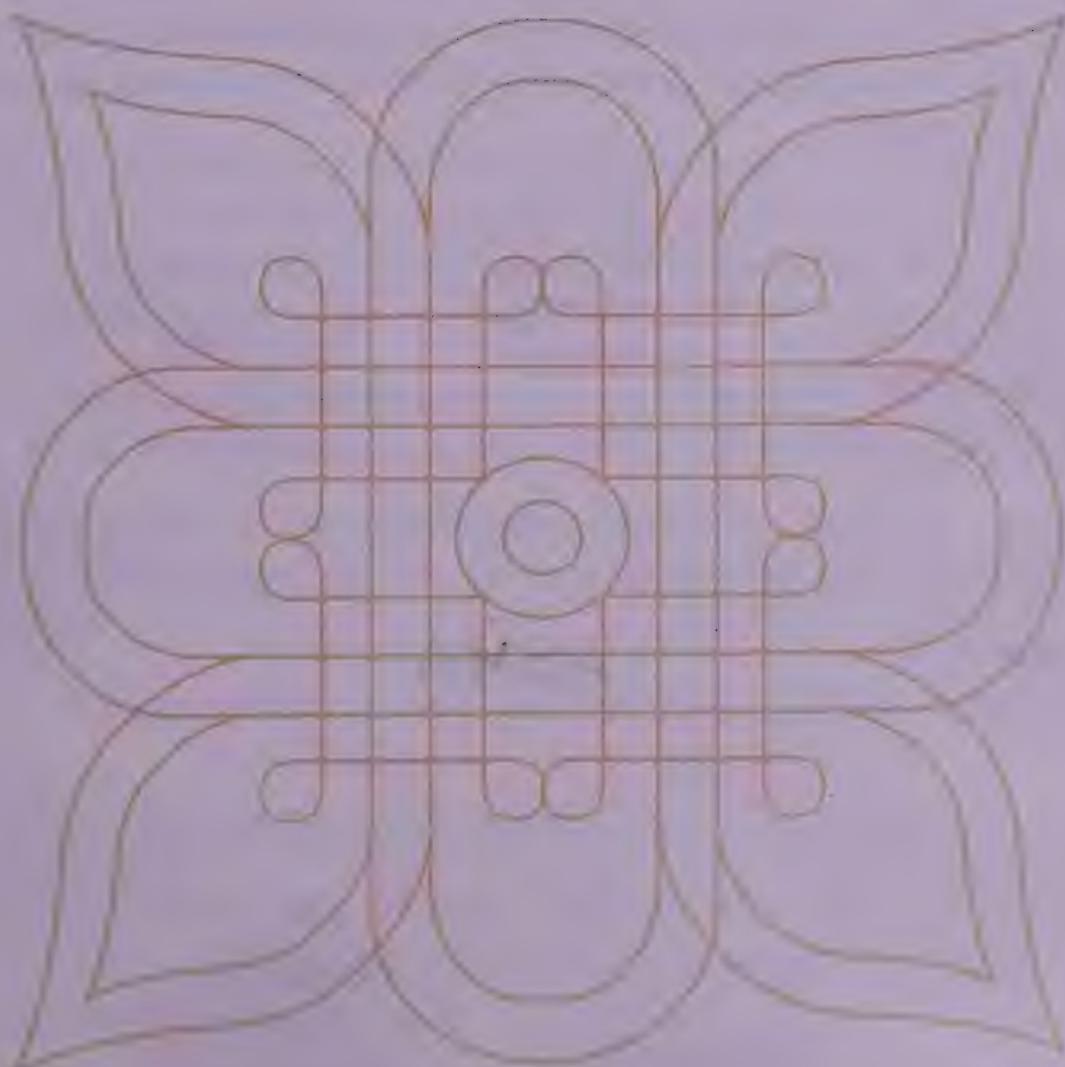
## **Consider timing**

There are good times to negotiate and bad times. Bad times include those situations where there is a high degree of anger on either side, a preoccupation with something else, a high level of stress or tiredness on one side or the other. The best outcome for almost all negotiations is a win/win situation when both parties walk away with a positive feeling about having achieved their goals.

## **Suggestions for Effective Negotiation**

While negotiating as an ASHA you must have unlimited patience. Never try to make the opponent feel low and defeated. Emphathise with the other person to understand her/his perspective.

Be positive and open in your approach. Do not begin the discussion with any set assumptions or negative feelings. Approach a negotiation with an attitude of, "I accept you as an equal negotiating partner and respect your right to have an opinion of your own." You may think that this is being soft and not effective, but this approach is a sign of internal strength and confidence.



# Coordination Skills

As an ASHA you are a link between health care services and the community. Therefore, you are expected to regularly coordinate with various stakeholders and the community.



You need to be aware of different ways of coordination and how to ensure effective coordination. With effective coordination you will be able to improve the health status of your community.

You need to coordinate with the health facilities to

- learn about decisions taken at the PHC or at the Integrated Child Development officers' level
- share your concerns regarding the access to health care and nutrition services at the village level
- jointly plan health activities to get optimum outcome
- plan health camp at the village level and organise MAMTA Day
- set up mechanisms to ensure timely referrals for pregnant women

There are different ways of coordination. The most common way of coordination is to meet the concerned person regularly and discuss the issue or share information. Another way of coordination is to call a meeting. You may need special skills for effective coordination. Let us understand them.

Each meeting needs to be productive. A productive meeting is well-planned and result-oriented. Unproductive meetings are too long, vague in purpose, poorly controlled and frustrating.

- Decide the agenda of the meeting. Decide who should be called. Invite only those people who can contribute to the meeting and take follow-up actions.
- Share the agenda with the concerned persons. This is very critical. At the village level there may be no need to send a written agenda, However you need to clearly orally inform them about the purpose of the meeting and the points, which need to be discussed.
- At the beginning of the meeting, welcome all the participants. Make a circular sitting arrangement to enable an enriching conversation/dialogue.
- Explain the purpose of the meeting again and make sure that they all have a common understanding. Jointly fix how much time you need to spend on the meeting.
- Give time to each person to share their views. Avoid simultaneous discussions.
- If decisions need to be taken, discuss them and articulate the outcome.
- If actions need to be taken after the meeting, list down the actions along with who is responsible for the action, who will support it and a time-line for completion of the action.
- At the end of the meeting prepare a brief report. The report needs to have following information:



## Documentation of the Meeting

Date:

Time:

**Venue:**

## Purpose of the meeting

#### **Members present during the meeting**

## Absent members

1)

2)

3)

4)

## Decisions taken

1)

2)

3)

#### Action to be taken

Actions	Who will take action?	Who will support it?	Date of completion of the action

### Signatures of the members

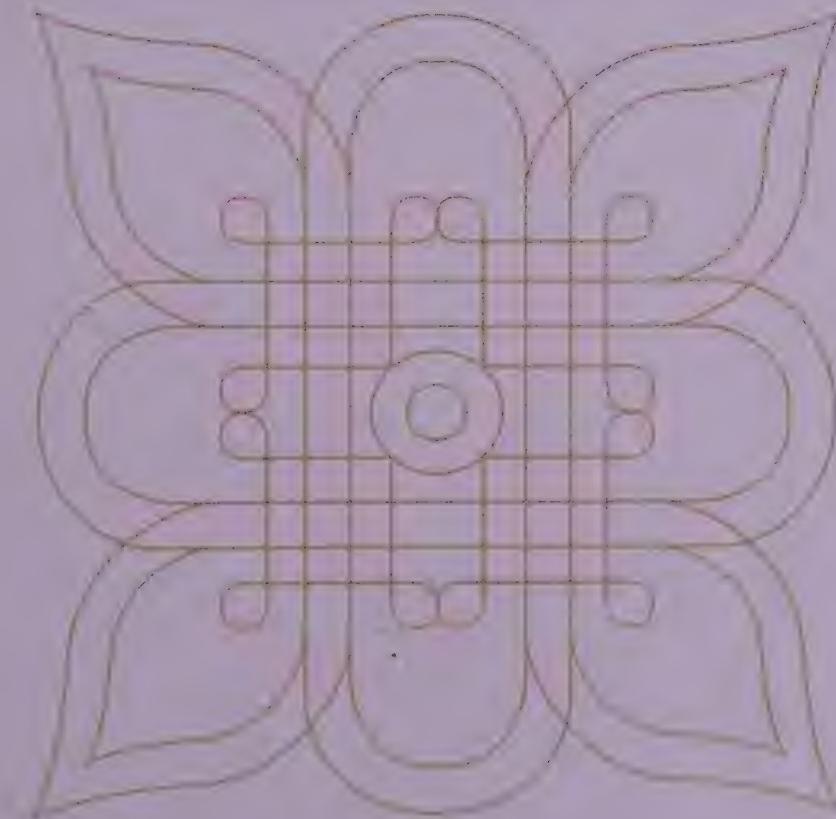
This report needs to be appropriately filed and should be referred to during the next meeting, to review the progress.

Some tips to play your role as an effective coordinator of a village meeting

- As an ASHA you have to prepare adequately before meeting. Personally meet the participants beforehand and inform them about the agenda of the meeting. Have clarity on what you are going to discuss. You should also be well aware about the complexity of the issue.
  - You should be able to judge what will be the reaction of the other person when you discuss the issue with her or him. Be prepared with the counter-arguments.
  - While having the discussion listen and observe carefully. Any change in a person's expression communicate a lot.

- During the discussion, if you need to take some on-the-spot decision, be prepared for it.
- At the end of the discussion, briefly articulate the decision taken or the actions enlisted.
- Within a few days after the discussion. Ensure that the decisions are put into action.
- It is very important that each meeting is documented. You may use the given format to document your meetings.
- In the process of coordination, each member plays an important role. As an ASHA you need to make sure that you are in touch with all the concerned stakeholders and keep them informed of the progress.
- Never hesitate to take help of others while facilitating a meeting. If you need help, identify the person well in advance and brief her/him what kind of help you need. You should have full confidence in the person you select.

**A person needs to be confident and have good self-esteem so as to effectively articulate her/his thoughts.**



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